Library of Congress

INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Librarians in Moscow
Also: *The Washington Post* Looks at the Library

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INFORMATION BULLETIN

JAMES H. BILLINGTON
Librarian of Congress

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On the Cover: The 'White House,' or Russian parliament building, where Russian republic President Boris Yeltsin took refuge with his supporters during the attempted coup in the Soviet Union. Fourteen delegates from the Library were attending the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions conference just a few blocks away. *AP/Wide World Photos*

Cover Story: The Coup That Wasn't: When members of the Library's delegation to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions left for Moscow, they never could have predicted how exciting their trip would be. 323

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Feature Story: Many stories about this institution, written by Library staff, have appeared in the *Information Bulletin*. This time the *LCIB* is reprinting a story from an outside source: *The Washington Post Magazine*, which ran a major piece on LC just before the reopening of the Main Reading Room in June. 324

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Coup Attempt in Moscow Greets Attendees

Librarians 'Didn't Miss a Beat'

When a delegation of Library of Congress staffers, including the Librarian, traveled to Moscow to attend an annual international conference of librarians, none could have predicted the events that would unfold during their stay.

Fourteen LC staffers, led by James H. Billington, witnessed history in the Soviet Union on Aug. 19, the day after the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) had officially convened. The conference theme: "Libraries and Culture: Their Relationship."

As of press time, Aug. 23, the coup had had little effect on the librarians' schedule.

According to Janet Chase, executive assistant to the Librarian, Dr. Billington told her Aug. 21 how "impressed" he was with the way the Library delegation had continued with business as usual during the coup attempt. This, despite the fact that tanks were stationed at the Russian parliament building, or "White House," just a few blocks away from the Moscow International Center for International Trade and Scientific Cooperation with Foreign Countries, where IFLA meetings were held.

As the world's largest library, LC always has business to conduct at the IFLA conference, attended this year by 1,500 men and women, including 300 Americans. For example, Susan Tarr, chief of LC's Cataloging Distribution Service, attended meetings as well as helping CDS's Kevin Flood and Kathryn Mendenhall in the exhibit booth. Natalia Montviloff of the Shared Cataloging Division and a Russian-American, also worked in the booth in Moscow, acting as an interpreter.

In Washington, CDS's Deborah Ramsey said, "I talked Hewlett-Packard in Moscow into loaning us a PC" for use in demonstrating CDS products at IFLA." She added that it was important for CDS to attend the Moscow conference "to give the Library a presence, specifically to reach out to foreign markets and expand on already established business" overseas.

John Byrum, chief of the Descriptive Cataloging Division, attended because he is "very active in international cooperation on cataloging and [setting] cataloging standards," said Robert Hiatt of the Cataloging Directorate.

Henry Paris, chief of the Materials Development Section of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, presented a paper in Moscow on technology used by NLS and "how that technology is used around the world," said Robert Fistick, head of the NLS Publications and Media Section. IFLA has a special section for delegates from libraries for the blind and physically handicapped, which was founded by NLS Director Frank Kurt Cylke.

When first news of the coup reached Washington, Library staffers and families worried about the safety of their colleagues and loved ones in Moscow. Most of the LC delegation was booked into the Rossiya Hotel on Red Square, across from the Kremlin.

Janet Chase became the designated contact person; she kept in touch with LC departments, whose managers passed the word to family members of LC staff who were in Moscow. An electronic mail message came Aug. 19 from Dr. Billington, via Mikhail Levner of the Library's acquisitions office in Moscow:

"Please let the families and staff of LC IFLA delegates know that Dr. Billington has been in frequent contact with the Embassy. The Embassy

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The Librarian Appears on 'Nightline'

James H. Billington could not have chosen a better time to be in Moscow.

As one who has devoted his scholarly career to the study of Russian culture, he could witness what he described as "one of those defining moments in history, when you see a people you've been studying all your life not only come to life, but in effect define the whole future course of their country."

So said the Librarian to Ted Koppel, when he appeared on ABC's 'Nightline' Aug. 21. Dr. Billington told his host that the day before he had been a guest on a Soviet call-in TV talk show. "There is this whole network of internal communication that has grown up and really transformed the nature of consciousness in this country. That was dramatized by the wide spectrum of popular resistance to [the coup that] was attempted."

"Do you believe the seeds of democracy really have taken hold?" asked Mr. Koppel.

"This is the fever break that determines whether or not the patient will live or die, and I think that the patient has a chance to live," replied Dr. Billington.

"But I think not just the seeds of democracy. . . . There's a movement forward to democracy and also backward to religion, the . . . rediscovery of their deeper spiritual roots," he concluded.

Photo courtesy of Patrick Sheehan

The Washington Post Looks at the Library

by Linton Weeks

The following is reprinted with the permission of The Washington Post Magazine, *which published this article, titled "Brave New Library," May 26.*

The Britons visiting the Library of Congress are a rather stuffy pair, really. And they seem very bored. They are sitting in a conference room on the sixth floor of the Madison Building, looking over a copy of the Library's annual report. Kenneth Cooper, chief executive of the British Library, is given to saying things like, "We're quite proud of our annual report, yes. Rather glossy. Staff worked hard. They don't rest content." His sidekick is Michael Saunders Watson, chairman of the British Library Board. Saunders Watson tells me at one point that he's a farmer, yes, lives in a castle that his family's owned for centuries. "Rented it from Henry the Eighth in 1530," he says. "Bought it from James the First."

Cooper and Saunders Watson are on a fact-finding mission to the Library of Congress. They are both trim, impeccably groomed, dressed in dark suits. Occasionally Saunders Watson adjusts his half-glasses and takes a few notes. As a session on the computerized card catalog ends, Saunders Watson says, "I thought our system was complicated. Yours is a nightmare." The two men laugh, say yes rather a couple of times, then settle back in their seats muttering about the prohibitive expense of maintaining books these days.

The past and the future: An 1893 copy of "Fred Ott's Sneeze" is the earliest extant copyrighted motion picture; Dr. Billington and the American Memory project, which lets users gaze "into the future of the largest library in the world."

As if on cue, the door to the hallway swings open and Carl Fleischhauer, coordinator of the American Memory project, wheels in a multitiered cart. Perched on its shelves are a Macintosh II microcomputer, complete with a keyboard, a mouse, a CD-ROM disk drive and a 19-inch SuperMac monitor; a Pioneer Laservision videodisc player with a Pioneer 26-inch video monitor; and an Apple laser printer. No one says a word, but there is a sense among us that we are gazing into the future of the largest library in the world.

As Fleischhauer is hooking up the hardware, LC special projects czar Bob Zich glides in and launches into a canned, but fascinating, history of American Memory. A stylish American Memory logo appears on the Mac and intriguing historical photos begin to flash on the Pioneer monitor. Cooper and Saunders Watson come alive. Saunders Watson sits on the edge of his seat. Cooper asks permission to move closer to the screens.

Zich (he pronounces it Zeke) says that in the fall of 1987, when Librarian of Congress James Billington was being sworn in, Billington spoke of wanting to harness new technology to get the Library's collections out to the public. And the American Memory project was born.

As Zich mans the mouse, Fleischhauer interprets the images that flash on the two screens. In this prototype of American Memory, a floor plan of the Jefferson Building appears on the Macintosh. This, Fleischhauer explains, is the main menu. The user can move the cursor to the "Reading Room," which accesses the collections on both the CD-ROM and the videodisc, or the "Exhibit Hall," which provides smaller, edited versions that make the collections more accessible.

"Let's try 'Carts and Wagons,' " Fleischhauer says. Zich types in the words, taps the Find button and executes a search through the Detroit Publishing Co. collection, a series of 25,000 early 20th century American

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Brave New Library *(Cont. from p. 325)* photographs that are stored on the videodisc in the Pioneer video player. More than 100 references, or "hits," appear on the screen. With a flick of another button, Zich chooses one image after another of carts and wagons on the video monitor—a cart crossing a river in Florida, a cart unloading oysters on the Baltimore waterfront, a cart in New Orleans's French Quarter. The visual display is dazzling.

Then Fleischhauer asks Zich to call up a certain motion picture. In a few seconds, a silent movie from another collection on the same videodisc fades in on the video monitor. It's an eerie time-lapse demolition of Manhattan's Star Theater in 1902. The irony of the scene—the motion picture industry recording the death of a stage theater—is not lost on Fleischhauer.

"If I understand your strategy," says Cooper, who from the side bears a frightening resemblance to Sam Donaldson, "you're thinking of assembling a data base that's accessible to anyone."

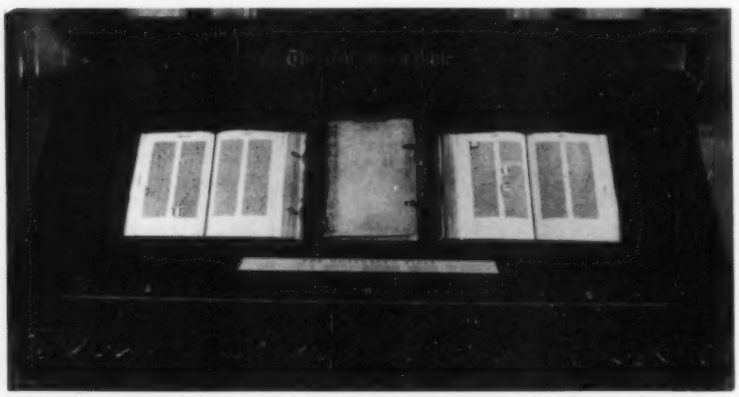
Zich nods and smiles.

Cooper seems to grasp the magnitude of American Memory's possibilities: the Library of Congress's vast holdings—its texts and photos and musical recordings and motion pictures—transferred to electronic media and made available to anyone in the world with the right hardware. "There are no boundaries," he says. "It's wonderful, isn't it?"

"Absolutely amazing," says Saunders Watson.

Fleischhauer has been gazing out the window at the Library's blue and white flag flapping in the breeze. "Well . . . we are concerned that we're a library," he says, choosing his words carefully. "And maybe we shouldn't do this at all."

Calling the Library of Congress a library is like calling Coca-Cola a little old soda pop company. The Library is a complex of three gargantuan buildings on Capitol Hill—the Thomas Jefferson Building, the John Adams Building and the James Madison Building. The three structures, with a total of 64.6 acres of office space, loom over Independence Avenue, just beyond the south shoulder of the Capitol, and are connected by a series of dreary tunnels.



The Library's three-volume Gutenberg Bible (15th century), purchased in 1930, is in mint condition.

The Jefferson Building, built in 1897, is the jewel of the three. The light and airy American Renaissance-style building is full of beautiful paintings and sculpture. Its marble halls, galleries and study areas are monuments to the original architects' intent that the Library should be "a museum of literature, science and art, than strictly taken as a collection of books." The elegant, expansive Main Reading Room, with its 160-foot-high dome and its concentric arrangement of oak reading tables, is one of modern civilization's grand temples of learning. As part of an $81.5 million renovation project, the Main Reading Room was closed for more than three years; it opened to the public June 3.

The Adams Building, which is east of the Jefferson Building, was built in 1939 to serve as a storage house, and it looks like one. Though the building has evolved over the years into a center for science and technology, it still serves as a storage facility.

Built in 1980, the Madison Building, which stands to the south of the Jefferson Building, across Independence Avenue, was designed to accommodate the Library's ever expanding multimedia collections. It also houses the Library's main administrative sections, its massive Law Library, the Copyright Office, Collections Services, the Prints and Photographs Division, the Motion Picture Division and countless other Library offices. The Congressional Research Service, a branch of the Library that carries on the original intent of the Library of Congress—to provide research and informational assistance to Congress—is also in the Madison Building.

The Library also has about 350,000 square feet of secondary storage space in Landover, at an Air Force base in Ohio and under a mountain in Pennsylvania. Because all of the buildings in the system are bursting at the seams, still another secondary facility is in the planning stages. The Library has an insatiable appetite for more space, and for good reason. Consider these numbers: The Library's collections of nearly 100 million items are stashed away on 532

miles of shelving. It has more than 20 million books and pamphlets, written in 470 languages, including South Asian poetry volumes penned on palm leaves and bound with rope, a Sumerian cuneiform tablet written in 1040 B.C. and a 1-millimeter-square book called *Old King Cole!*—a photographically reduced version of the nursery rhyme—that is about the size of the period at the end of this sentence.

The Library owns the world's largest collection of maps and atlases—more than 4 million, some dating back six centuries. It has more than 7 million musical items, including the nation's largest collection of stringed instruments by Stradivarius; more than 14 million prints and photographs; and more than 600,000 videotapes, videodiscs and motion pictures, including an 1893 copy of Thomas Edison's "Fred Ott's Sneeze," the earliest surviving copyrighted motion picture. It also is the keeper of the papers of 23 U.S. presidents; a number of speeches by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.; a rough draft of the Declaration of Independence in Thomas Jefferson's hand with annotations by Benjamin Franklin and John Adams; copies of the Gettysburg Address and the Emancipation Proclamation in Lincoln's handwriting; the archives of the NAACP; a photograph taken by Orville Wright of his historic first flight; a 1639 watercolor map of Manhattan Island; and box after box after box of the flotsam and jetsam of world culture.

In fact, the Library has taken in, and continues to take in, more items than it can catalog. This backlog of uncataloged materials, called arrearage, is one of the Library's most embarrassing problems. At present, there are nearly 40 million items still to be processed. And more are being acquired every day. By its own estimates, the Library collects a new item every five seconds of each workday.

The Library adds to its collection in a variety of ways. Last year, for instance, the Copyright Office received for registration more than 1 million books and pamphlets, motion picture scripts and prints, musical scores and recordings, television shows, computer programs and other forms of creative expression. The Library of Congress kept about half of these items. The Library also receives copies of most documents printed by the federal government. It receives gifts from private donors as well. Perhaps the most notable of these gifts was a set of 2,653 ancient and rare books bequeathed by Sears Roebuck heir Lessing J. Rosenwald in 1979. And the Library spends more than $5 million a year on purchases—everything from foreign newspapers to private libraries. One of its most famous acquisitions was its 1930 purchase of Otto H.F. Vollbehr's collection of more than 3,000 15th century books, including a mint-condition three-volume Gutenberg Bible.

Once a book is in the clutches of the Library, it is sent to the cataloging divisions. It is here that some of the Library's most valuable and underappreciated work is performed. Each book is examined by one or more catalogers who establish the author of the volume, how the author's name should be entered into the catalog and other features of the book—its title, publisher, number of pages, etc. Another cataloger determines the book's subject heading under the LC classification system—which can be a tricky proposition—and all of this information is then entered into a computer and sold to smaller libraries, which use the information to organize and catalog their own collections. According to James Billington, the Library's cataloging service alone would justify its existence. In 1990, the Library claims, it saved the nation's 14,000 libraries more than $350 million.

On an average workday, the Library catalogs more than 730 books; answers more than 1,900 inquiries in its Copyright Office; responds to more than 2,000 research assignments from Congress in its Congressional Research Service office; and spends about $1.2 million of the taxpayers' money. It employs 4,500 people in its Washington offices and in outposts such as Cairo, Jakarta, Karachi, Moscow, Nairobi, New Delhi

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More than 12,000 people came to the Library June 1–2 and waited in line to see the newly opened Main Reading Room after a 3½-year renovation. *Photo by Helen Dalrymple*

Brave New Library *(Cont. from p. 327)*

and Rio de Janeiro, and it boasts that its staff is capable of speaking more than 60 languages. The cafeteria on the sixth floor of the Madison Building can be a lunchtime Tower of Babel, with one group speaking Hungarian, another Arabic and a third Latin.

It was into this labyrinth that Dr. Billington stepped when he was appointed by Ronald Reagan to be the 13th librarian of Congress. A renowned Sovietologist who had served as director of the Smithsonian's Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars for 14 years, he immediately set about to shake things up. To the consternation of some employees, he reorganized the Library into seven departments: Management Services, Congressional Services, Collections Services, Constituent Services, Copyright Office, Cultural Affairs and Special Projects. The department heads—and the head of the Law Library—sit on Dr. Billington's management team and answer directly to him.

Dr. Billington is the latest in an apostolic succession that began with John Beckley, the nation's first librarian, and includes such venerable men of letters as poet Archibald MacLeish and historian Daniel Boorstin. The Library of Congress was established on April 24, 1800, when Congress set aside $5,000 for the purchase of "such books as may be necessary for Congress." During his presidency, 1801 to 1809, Thomas Jefferson took a hands-on approach to the Library, establishing its ground rules and appointing Beckley.

When the British invaded Washington in 1814, they destroyed the Capitol building and its Library. Jefferson, who by then was living at Monticello and experiencing cash flow problems, sold Congress his personal collection of 6,000 volumes in 1815 to restock the Library. According to historians, Jefferson's rich and diverse literary interests set the tone for the Library's liberal and universal acquisitions policy.

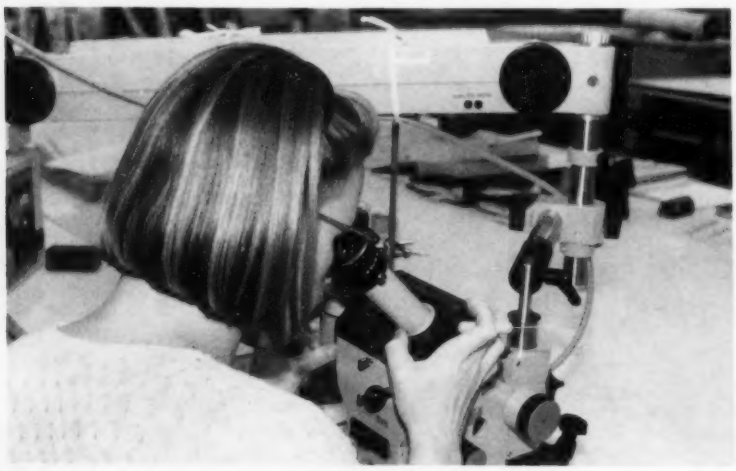
Until about 1870, the Library was maintained in a bank of rooms in the Capitol and was used mostly by members of Congress and the justices of the Supreme Court. But Librarian Ainsworth Rand Spofford—the first librarian to see the potential for a national library—increased the Library's collections by persuading Congress to pass a new copyright law. The law directed that copies of each book, map, chart, musical composition, engraving, woodcut or print produced in America be sent to the Library for registration. He also arranged to receive a hundred copies of important federal government documents, most of which he then traded to foreign countries for their documents and newspapers. Spofford then opened the Library to scholars and to the public. Once the documents and patrons began pouring in, Spofford realized that the Library needed its own space, and he began lobbying for a new edifice that would become the Jefferson Building.

Today the Library is visited annually by more than a million people from all over the world who are curious to see this amazing institution. I too have come as a curious visitor to the Library, hoping to educate myself about how it works, but early on I am overwhelmed by the magnitude of the place. At one point, seeking refuge from the onslaught of facts and artifacts, I sit on a bench next to a 70 million-year-old wheel of petrified wood in the atrium, the one user-friendly public space in the Madison Building. I am trying to relax, but my mind reels with questions.

Can this vast gathering of universal information continue indefinitely? With the Library taking in 1.6 million items a year, where will it all end?

More practically, where will it all be stored? In more and more warehouses with more and more floors and more and more shelves? How will the Library ever catalog all of its acquisitions?

Most troubling, it seems to me, are some even broader questions: Can the Library, in this age of financial constraints, keep spending millions of dollars each year to keep books alive, or will it focus its attention and budgets on the ever-evolving multimedia technology? If so, what does this say about the direction of our



Jane Smith uses a microscope in the Conservation Office to help in the preservation of a Hebrew manuscript. *Photo by Yusef El-Amin*

culture? What will the Library of Congress of the future look like?

I carry these questions with me as I explore the corridors and back rooms of the Library, trying to understand as much as possible the ways and wiles of this venerable institution. At one point, I run into Bob Zich, the special projects man, and tell him about my atrium experience, about my uneasiness with the notion that books may one day go the way of passenger pigeons and LP record albums. Zich smiles and in his quiet, pleasant voice tells me that in 1988 Steve Jobs took a tour of the Library. As he stood among the nearly 40 million documents in the Library's manuscripts collection, Zich says, still smiling, the Silicon Valley whiz kid turned to him and said, "There has to be a better way."

For now, at least, the Library continues to do many of its tasks the old-fashioned way. And it continues to be known primarily as a repository for books from all over the world. So I begin my exploration by seeking out Lolita Silva in the Selections Office. Silva and two other selections officers are charged with culling through thousands of books and periodicals a day and deciding which the Library will keep and which it will not.

Though she does much of her sorting at her desk in an ugly, windowless office, Silva occasionally escapes. Most every day at 1 p.m. she slips on a dark green apron, gets into the elevator and goes down to the materials control wing of the Copyright Office on the fourth floor to sort through yet more books.

Today she has forgotten her apron, but it doesn't slow her down. She and her colleagues begin to examine the hundreds of books stacked on seven tables, all submitted for U.S. copyright registration. Wielding a pencil that is blue on one end and red on the other, she puts a red X on the first page of any book she doesn't want. Two copies of each book are submitted; Silva makes a blue check to mark those that she wants one copy of and places a sliver of paper in a book if she wants to keep both volumes. The Library has a list of established guidelines on what it will keep and what it won't. Silva knows the standards by heart.

"If I have an inkling there will be interest, I'll keep the book," she says. Apart from the Library's rigid selection standards, "I think you develop a feel for the material. Sometimes with a book of poetry—how it's published, how it's presented to you—tells you it's worth keeping."

She marks a stack of coupon books with a red X. "We don't take these," she says. "We reject a lot of in-house publications. We don't take elementary or high school textbooks unless they deal with American history. No workbooks, answer keys, instructor's manuals."

Dressed this day in a bright red sweater, blue skirt, blue stockings and blue shoes, Silva looks remarkably like her pencil. She has short, light brown hair and a gentle face. But she is ruthless with the red lead. She rejects a Williams-Sonoma catalog. "The only catalogs we keep," she says, "are Sears and Montgomery Ward."

She reaches for a county history. "We take all genealogies and local histories," she explains.

An inspirational pamphlet rises to the top of the stack. "There's been an explosion in religious publishing," she says with a sigh. "But we don't take material for Sunday schools or . . . single sermons." She says the Library does have a first-rate collection of works by L. Ron Hubbard.

"We do take price guides—cars, barbed wire, beer cans," she says. "And we take first-person accounts of American history or military history."

She lifts a hefty, well-designed tome titled *Poles in the 19th Century*. She keeps both massive copies. She slides out a thin volume of Will Weng crossword puzzles. "We don't keep crossword puzzle books," she says. "But we do keep crossword dictionaries." She swiftly rejects a whole batch of Fisher-Price Activity

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Recording in progress: A talking book is being made at the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, which serves 700,000 patrons a year. *Photo by Jim Higgins*

Brave New Library *(Cont. from p. 329)*

Books but holds on to a pile of Dell paperback westerns and romances.

"We keep car manuals," Silva says. "They're used heavily, so I understand. I don't have a car."

Another selections officer asks her a question about a WordPerfect software user's guide. "This should have had a disk included," he explains, showing her an empty pocket on the book's jacket. "Should we try to get it?"

By all means, Silva tells him. "We keep all computer books," she says. "It seems that we have more computer books than anything else."

On one table is William F. Buckley's latest Blackford Oakes novel, *Tucker's Last Stand*. Both copies of *Tucker* are marked for keeping and loaded into a tub destined for the Exchange and Gift section in the basement, where it will be determined if the Library already has a copy of the book. If not, *Tucker* will be sent to be cataloged, then to shelf-listing (where someone will decide in which of the Library's collections the book should be placed), then to binding and labeling, then onto a shelf with Buckley's other novels.

"We have to clear the tables on a daily basis," she says. "We usually get done in two hours."

Today she is finished in an hour. She returns to her cheerless office to make her selections of books from the rest of the world.

When the person shelving Buckley's novel on Deck 34 in the Jefferson Building enters the stacks, he or she can depend on two things: It will be cool and it will be noisy. It's cool because the temperature is kept at about 68 degrees and there are no windows. The sun never sets, or rises, on this interior empire. It's noisy because of the Library's elaborate book delivery system, a tangled web of clunky conveyor belts, roller tracks and dumbwaiters that ferries books back and forth from building to building, floor to floor, room to room, desk to desk, person to person. The stacks, or decks as they are known at the Library, are in the centers of the Jefferson and Adams buildings and in the basement of the Madison Building—floor after floor, row after row, shelf after shelf, book after book after book after book. The control room for books kept in the Adams Building is on Deck 12 of the Adams Building. The control room for the Jefferson and Madison buildings is a circular space directly beneath the Main Reading Room.

Millions of items are sent each year to the Receiving Unit in the Madison Building . . .

Today Stacy Long is in the hot seat of the Jefferson Building control room. She receives the request slips and makes sure they are sent to the appropriate deck. Long is seated on a stool. She's got on a sweater, big earrings, comfortable shoes. Above the desk is a postcard with a seagull on a pier overlooking a marsh. She is listening to cool jazz on WHUR and reading a Library copy of Sidney Sheldon's *The Other Side of Midnight*.

A pneumatic tube shoots down from a reading room in the Adams Building and drops into a basket at Long's left. *Thwump*. Long reaches over, opens the container, removes a 3-by-5-inch slip of paper requesting a certain history book. She packs the slip in another tube and reroutes it upstairs to Deck 44. The book, one hopes, will be found in the stacks by a deck attendant, placed in a gray plastic box and sent trundling back on a yellow rollway to the control room, where still another deck attendant will receive the gray box, remove the book and load it into a blue box, this one bound for the Adams Building reading room, where the request originated and where yet another deck attendant is waiting to deliver the book to the patient reader.

Then again, there's a chance the book will not be found at all and a dreaded little slip of paper will be delivered to the reading desk instead, marked "Not on Shelf."

There are around 60 attendants in the general reading stacks at any given time. Most are college students working part-time, and their task is a thankless one. Day after day in a windowless world, they birddog books for people they will never see. And the people they do see in the stacks, at least those who are not fellow attendants, are immediately suspect.

According to Library policy, the stacks are closed to the public, and

efforts are being made to tighten security. Serious researchers are issued special deck passes, worn like dog tags round the neck. But policing the stacks is a nearly impossible job. And theft is a major headache. According to Larry Boyer, assistant head of the Main Reading Room, a sophisticated thief can make a lot of money stealing ancient books or prints. Boyer says the Library has recently seen an increase in thefts of 18th and 19th century prints. He explains that people sneak into the stacks and use razor blades to cut the illustrations from the books. Then they sell them to antiques dealers as old prints.

tion is completed. Whole drawers of cards—for example, all of the subject titles under heraldry, or flowers, or Presbyterians, or slide rule—are missing. Staffers believe that the culprits may be lazy scholars who want to compile bibliographies at their leisure, or hard-core book thieves who are scoping out the volumes they want to steal next. Such theft can be devastatingly expensive. One man was caught smuggling expensive art books from the Library in a cleverly designed portfolio. The Library estimated that he had stolen more than $10,000 worth of books before security discovered his scheme.

. . . and many of them are reviewed by LC's selection officers, who must decide what to keep.

According to one internal report, about 250,000 books are missing from the Library's collections. Some of those volumes, the report states, are probably sitting on the desks of innocent, but careless, Library staff members. But the report also points out that a multitude of the Library's books have been lost or stolen.

Just recently, staffers discovered that thousands of cards have been stolen from the old card catalog, which is being kept in the Adams Building until the Jefferson renova-

The most celebrated heist was that of Charles Merrill Mount, a Washington art historian, who was sentenced in 1989 to five years in federal prison for being in possession of valuable documents belonging to the National Archives and the Library of Congress. Mount was collared when he tried to sell letters written by artist James McNeill Whistler, Winston Churchill and Henry James to a bookstore in Boston. The papers belonged to the Library. According to police reports, staff members at the Library believed Mount to be a serious scholar and never questioned his occasional trips into the manuscripts collection.

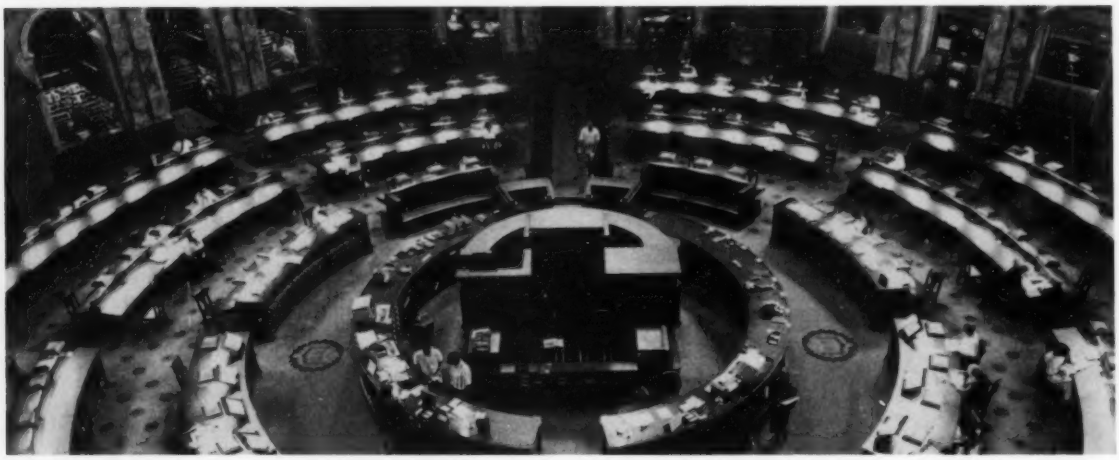
The Library is, after all, a magnet for researchers from all over the world who are drawn to its extraordinary collections and its inviting ambience. There are some two dozen reading rooms open to the public. The Main Reading Room in the Jefferson Building is the most famous, but there are also specialized reading rooms, such as the Social Science Reading Room, the Microform Reading Room, the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room and the Science Reading Room, which are near the special collections.

Such luminaries as Alex Haley, Herman Wouk and Barbara Tuchman have used the Library's resources to research their books. But, like smaller libraries everywhere, the Library of Congress also has had its share of, shall we say, characters.

One frequent visitor hogged a computer terminal for hours, trying to "contact China." One man spent his days copying down the reference catalog—some 50,000 volumes—on little green slips. One woman claimed to be the Official Tooth Fairy of the United States. Another called herself the Queen of France and believed that the CIA was tampering with her head. Every once in a while she'd scream to jam its system. Patrons have been known to wear trash cans and two-liter cola bottles on their heads.

Then there was the Bride of Christ, who camped out for a time in a study carrel in the gallery area near the clock in the Main Reading Room. Day after day, she pored over books looking for pictures of Jesus, or rifled through the phone books of America writing down the names of people whose souls had been saved.

(Cont. on p. 332)



Of the Library's more than 20 reading rooms, surely the most famous is the Main Reading Room . . .

Brave New Library *(Cont. from p. 331)*

Like the Bride of Christ, Tom Albro spends his days on a mission of salvation—though with his thick, neatly trimmed salt-and-pepper beard and dark, dark eyebrows, Albro, chief of the Library's rare book conservation section, looks more like a Magus. Asked to explain his work, Albro disappears into a locked vault in his laboratory, which is on the ground floor of the Madison Building. It is in this lab that a team of nine conservators, led by Albro, labors hour after hour to preserve the written word.

In a moment Albro returns with a red box that contains a handwritten copy of James Madison's *A Brief System of Logick*. Even the casual observer can see that the book's been through hell. It's suffered severe water damage. The words have bled through the paper, making the text almost unreadable. The pages are brittle and obviously were at one time ragged and dog-eared. By all rights, it should be dust. But through the rescue work of Albro and his staff, the book has been preserved.

The resuscitation process, Albro says, "is very labor-intensive, very expensive." When a book is brought to the lab, Albro examines it and makes an estimate of how much staff time—measured in hours, or "points"—it's going to take to reclaim it. Then he turns it over to one of his conservators, who will oversee every detail of the book's rehabilitation—from its assessment on through the washing and mending and rebinding to the making of the storage box, which can be extremely handsome and intricately fashioned.

The Madison book took 200 points to refurbish and cost an estimated $8,000. Albro describes the work on the book as one might describe the rehabbing of an old house. The more you get into it, he says, the more problems you discover.

"The ink," he says, handling the book gingerly, "is very acidic because it's made from carbon and oak gall." Gall, which is also used for tanning, is an extract from those unsightly tumors you see growing on oak trees. "It provides a permanence," he says. The sizing—a thin glaze on the paper that keeps it from absorbing the ink—is made of an alum rosin. This too is quite acidic. Over the years, the acidity from the ink and the sizing breaks down the fibers of the page. So not only does the ink eventually eat through the paper, but the paper also eats itself.

To salvage the book, Albro says, conservators took out each leaf and laid it on a floating screen in a photographic sink. They washed each page in water, then dried it, then washed it again in magnesium bicarbonate, which works like a sun block to neutralize future acidity. They mended tears with Japanese paper and wheat paste. Then they reinforced the inside edges of the pages, rebound the book and boxed it.

From the vault Albro produces an armful of the Library's prize possessions:

☐ A buckram-covered clamshell box containing the Registrum Brevium, a legal document from the reign of Edward I in England. The 13th century text was written on vellum, the skin of a stillborn or fetal calf.

☐ A large flat box containing the text of a 1531 court case involving explorer Hernando Cortes. The exhibits of the case include eight native Indian pictographs—of blankets they made for the Spanish soldiers, banners they sewed from gold and feathers—submitted to the court as bills. The pictures were drawn on beaten paper, made either from

. . . followed by the Social Science Reading Room. *Photos by Jim Higgins and Reid Baker*

amatl, which is fig tree fibers, or maguey, which is cactus fibers. The text of the lawsuit was written on handmade paper from Genoa.

□ One volume of the three-volume Gutenberg Bible. The tome had been on display in the foyer of the Madison Building but during the Persian Gulf War was removed to the vault for "conservation purposes," Albro says, using his fingers as quotation marks. The volume was printed circa 1456 on vellum.

I remark on the apparent tediousness of Albro's job, the extreme care conservators must give to each book. "The word we like to think of is meticulous, not obsessive, OK," he says.

According to Albro, just repairing the rare books already in the Library's collections would keep his lab busy for the next 12,000 years. "But you're not neurotic about it," he says. "The problem is never going to be solved. We're never going to be able to restore every rare book in our collections.

"As soon as a book is restored," he adds, "it begins its decline again." He makes the point one more time, as if to underscore the existential futility of his task. "It's a permanent problem with no real solution."

The quest for a temporary solution, one that will stave off the deterioration of books, has caused the Library quite a bit of embarrassment. Since 1973, scientists in the Library's Preservation Research and Testing Office have been searching for a safe and effective way to treat large numbers of books with a chemical process that will neutralize the acids in the books' paper and inks. Near the end of 1985, the lab thought it had the problem licked. The panacea was diethyl zinc, or DEZ, a chemical used in the manufacture of plastics. The belief was, and still is, that when hundreds, even thousands, of books are placed in a vacuum chamber and exposed to DEZ vapors, they will absorb the acid-neutralizing mist and their shelf lives will be extended threefold, or more.

The Library believed so strongly in the palliative powers of the DEZ process that it had signed a contract with Northrop Services to build a pilot plant at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt. But during an early trial, a fire broke out in the vacuum-sealed chamber and much of the test equipment was destroyed. The Library is quick to point out that no people, or books, were harmed. As cleanup crews worked in the lab, however, other fires continued to ignite. And some researchers began shaking their head in disillusionment. Then in early 1986, only two weeks after the space shuttle Challenger exploded, NASA pulled the plug on the DEZ project. An Army demolition team was summoned to raze the plant. When the DEZ pipes were demolished, all hell broke loose and a vast fire swept through the area.

Still, the Library continued to develop the DEZ process through a private company in Texas. This summer, following a lengthy competition, the Library hopes to select an independent contractor with a plant large enough to carry on the deacidification mission.

One of those most intensely interested in the process is LC researcher Chandru Shahani, a compact man who wears a coat and tie under his lab coat and drinks Coca-Cola from a can with a straw. As he ushers me around his chemistry lab, we sidestep shelves and shelves of bottles and vials and beakers. There against one wall is a vacuum chamber that's no longer used, a silent reminder of

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Brave New Library *(Cont. from p. 333)* the lab's failure to perfect the DEZ process in-house. Over there is a turntable under lights for testing the effects of exposing paper to sunlight. Here is a machine that tests the aging of paper. There is one that measures colors.

Then we enter the sanctum sanctorum of the Library's laboratory—the controlled room. "In here," Shahani says, "it's 73 degrees Fahrenheit and 50 percent relative humidity." Everywhere there are paper-testing machines. In one of them a strip of paper shaped like a bookmark is being folded back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

Across the small room, Barbara Meier-Husby, a sweater draped around her shoulders, hovers over a microscope. She is working on a small and lovely book of hours, printed in France in the 16th century. This is part of the Library's vast Rosenwald Collection. On the table beside her are precision instruments similar to those used by a dentist, lead weights wrapped in fabric and a fine brush. She is applying a fixative solution to an illuminated portion of the manuscript, anchoring flecks of paint that might otherwise fall away.

As Shahani and I walk back to his office, I ask his opinion on the future of books and he begins to talk softly of his interest in optical disks.

"There are so many advantages to optical disks," he says. "Storage, random access. But standards have to fall into place. That's the way we're going—optical disks. It's not an idea that librarians like."

It's 9:30 a.m. and Librarian of Congress James Billington's management team has gathered in the Automation Orientation Room on the ground floor of the Madison Building for an update on the American Memory project.

Dr. Billington sits near the front. He is a distinguished looking man, a hybrid of scholar and businessman. He wears a gray herringbone business suit, but it's slightly rumpled. He has on a red tie with white stripes, a blue shirt with a flyaway collar and black wingtip shoes. His hair is silver, his eyes are intense, he squints a lot as if he's gazing into the distance.

American Memory coordinator Carl Fleischhauer again takes center stage. The 20-minute run-through is a technological tour de force, melding words, photos and moving pictures, a videodisc, a CD-ROM and the Library's computerized card catalog. The grand finale is Thomas Edison's 1901 film tour of the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo. Members of the management team, like the British visitors before, are knocked out by the display.

"This is great stuff, Carl."

"I love it."

"Incredible."

"The real work," Fleischhauer explains to those assembled, "is converting the content to electronic form." Currently the American Memory project has nearly 20 collections on disc or in production. Among the offerings are selected writings from the WPA Federal Writers' Project, 1936–1940; films of San Francisco before and after the 1906 earthquake; and a set of 350 African-American pamphlets from 1820 to 1920. Fleischhauer tells the group that the Library hopes to have 100 collections in electronic form by the end of the century. But that's only the beginning.

"What's your working hypothesis of what kind of people will be using American Memory?" Dr. Billington asks.

Bob Zich, LC special projects czar, steps in and says that initially American Memory will be available mainly in high school and college libraries. Eventually, however, project staffers envision direct access to the Library's collections for users of personal computers.

From the back of the room, education officer Carolyn Brown, who has worked on the American Memory project, says, "I see this as a hook for people who are not book-oriented." She says that through American Memory the Library is hoping to "draw kids into a book culture. I think there's a younger audience that will benefit."

The team voices its approval of this noble ideal.

This 1872 cartoon from *Harper's* shows the British burning LC's books in 1814. The Library later purchased Thomas Jefferson's library, in 1815.

When the meeting is over, I ask Fleischhauer about the origin of American Memory. He says it was Dr. Billington's baby. "It's his idea, his name. . . . It's the right idea, right name, right spin," he adds—and what's more, the project is a "magnet for donations."

In this period of national belt-tightening, this last point is crucial. For the first time in its history, the Library is attempting to attract outside funds. Dr. Billington has established a Development Office, and with the help of glitzy special projects such as American Memory, the Library is receiving support from major corporations such as Hewlett-Packard, Apple and IBM. It's a seductive reason for the Library to put its eggs in one basket—the technological future.

I ask Fleischhauer if there are any drawbacks to American Memory. He cites three:

First, there is the debate over arrearage. "We're ashamed about it," he says. "But it's not our fault." He points out that American Memory probably will not help reduce arrearage appreciably. "The more we go to the outside, the more we'll discover what the outside wants," he says—the implication being that to meet public demand, the Library will concentrate its resources on popular collections already cataloged.

Though the translation of large quantities of written texts to electronic form is, for now, painstaking and prohibitively costly, some staffers do see ways in which multimedia projects such as American Memory will help speed up the cataloging process. For instance, there will come a day when publishers will submit texts electronically to the Library's Copyright Office and then the texts will be transferred to an American Memory disc with the punch of a button. As that happens, of course, the need for a physical book will begin to disappear.

Second, Fleischhauer says, there are doubts about the project's feasibility and its value. So far, American Memory has been partly funded by private money, but it's extremely expensive and the projected payback is years away. Fleischhauer says there is no organized opposition to American Memory within the Library, but there are "grunts of skepticism."

Stephen Ostrow, chief of the Prints and Photographs Division, says he is delighted with the way that American Memory is dovetailing with his branch. But he does express one serious concern about the project: "I'm not sure they've fully defined their audience," he says. "We want these large bodies of materials accessible to the serious researcher. But there must be tremendous pressure . . . to place [American Memory] in the high school libraries." Who will be the user? he asks. Will it be the high school term paper writer, the doctoral thesis writer or the casual patron at the city and state public libraries? According to Ostrow, a pilot-project survey found that, among other things, high school students resisted using the data base for deeper inquiry. "They just wanted to browse."

Some LC staffers see a day when publishers will submit texts electronically to the Library's Copyright Office and then the texts will be transferred to an American Memory disc with the punch of a button. As that happens, the need for a physical book will begin to disappear.

The third drawback to American Memory, says Fleischhauer, is the notion shared by some of his colleagues that the Library is drifting away from its mission. "I'd like to think, as Carolyn Brown said, it will draw people to books," Fleischhauer says. "But that could just be intellectuals whistling in the dark."

The more I talk to Fleischhauer and others at the Library, the more I think they've seen the future—but are ambivalent about it. Bob Zich, by contrast, greets the technological millennium with evangelical enthusiasm. "In the 27, 28 years that I've been here, there's been a very considerable change, but it's just the beginning," Zich says happily. We are in his cramped office, surrounded by computer terminals and hard disk drives. He points to the computerization of the card catalog as the most conspicuous change so far. But now, he says, the Library is moving well beyond that with things like American Memory.

"We're getting right down to what it is the people need," Zich says, "and putting it into a form which will permit us not just to service our reading rooms, but to put it on the wire or zap it through a satellite or wherever you can get it to people—in libraries, and . . . in the future in their homes and cars."

Zich is into it now. He's seeing the future and it's portable and it's electronic and it's visual and it's slicker than we can imagine and it's inevitable. He tells me about Sony's handheld electronic book, which is being marketed in Japan, and the miniature encyclopedia coming next month from Franklin Electronic Publishers. "Slip it in your pocket," he says. "Little keyboard, punch in your words and it'll do the full text searching and all the rest of it. Its limitation, of course, is that it's devoted just to that one book." But "the Sony thing has [memory] cards. Cards are the equivalent of the books. . . . The machine is just there to read the contents of whatever card you stick in it."

He takes a breath. Then, tempering his zeal, he brings the conversation back to the book as we know it. "The book has been fantastically successful as a machine for holding words, ideas. Until we find some automated, electronic, computerized,

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Brave New Library *(Cont. from p. 335)* whatever, object that is as mechanically successful as the book, the book is still going to be really the prime source."

At present, he says, there's nothing "that duplicates all the virtues of the book. But you can see it coming, and you can see it in the Sony thing. You can see that probably before too long there will be something that will be about the size of an average paperback book. And it will maybe have a radio transmitter of the kind that you can get in your little portable . . . telephones that you have in your car. And it will be capable of accessing information central—which doesn't have to be in Washington. Could be anywhere. So people everywhere, carrying very portable and very efficient machines, will be able to get access to probably as much as it's commercially viable to put in electronic form."

Technological breakthroughs are often painted with blue-sky optimism, and the key phrase here is "commercially viable." Transferring the Library's entire book collection to videodisc would be impossible, so "information central" would provide a drastically limited version of what the Library now offers. In the future, as more and more books are published electronically, the electronic collection would expand, but much of the past would remain off line.

Another obstacle to the digitalization of the printed word is that gaining access to sophisticated electronic information will require better equipment than the antiquated phone lines and TV cables now in place. Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) and others are pushing Congress toward a nationwide informational superhighway of fiber optic lines that would link computers to vast information banks, such as the Library of Congress, but the price of such a network would be staggering.

But let's assume these obstacles are ignored or overcome. In the world Zich envisions, will we even need a nonelectronic Library of Congress?

Zich explains that the Library performs several functions. "It is the place to go to get information," he says. "I see that as almost being totally wiped out in the future. If all you need is just information, probably some electronic source will be brought in."

Reference librarians, or "information scientists," he explains, will be on call at the Library "helping people to use the mass of materials that are available and . . . figuring out how to, in fact, make it easier for people to get access to these resources that are available."

At some point in the future, he says, "individual people will be able themselves to directly access these masses of things—if all they want is information."

But the Library will retain some functions, he says, such as "storing things which have value and interest in themselves, not just because of the information they happen to contain. And just as you will go to the National Gallery to see its Leonardo or go to the Smithsonian to see the Spirit of St. Louis and so on, you will want to go to libraries to see the Gutenberg or the original printing of Shakespeare's plays or to see Lincoln's handwritten version of the Gettysburg Address."

"I've suggested," he says, "and in part disturbed my fellow librarians, that in fact the big research libraries and the great national libraries and their great buildings will go the way of the railroad stations and the movie palaces of an earlier era which were really vital institutions in their time. . . . Somehow folks moved away from that when the technology changed."

In short, Zich sees a future in which libraries will be nothing more than museums of the printed word unless they seize the opportunity to become clearinghouses of electronic information. So I ask him this question: Is the Library's increasing investment of time, energy and resources in electronic, visually oriented projects such as American Memory perhaps contributing to the illiteracy and lack of historical context that any library ostensibly combats?

Zich doesn't miss a beat. He's heard this heresy before and he's delighted to try and make a believer of me. In libraries, he says, "you almost use American Memory as bait . . . It looks sort of like television, it looks like computers. Kids get excited about that."

He explains that young people are lured into American Memory by a series of flashing photos, a device known as an "attract mode," which is also found in most video arcade games. "You see a racer barreling down a track, flip over and go through that again," Zich says. "Just to get the eye of the kids so that they'll come over and pay some attention." The attract mode of American Memory is a series of 299 black-and-white historical photographs.

For now, Zich says, American Memory gives people "an incentive to start exploring traditional media"—books, newspapers, magazines. But in the future according to Zich, "we'll have such a richness of material in electronic form" that paper books, newspapers and magazines may be rendered obsolete.

James Billington can sit still for only so long, then he has to get up and move around—hands in pockets, change jingling—get the blood flowing, the synapses firing. We are in his office, a lovely room with two walls of windows that look out over the Capitol to the west and the Jefferson Building to the north. He is talking about the choices he has made for the Library.

"One hundred and ninety years of accumulation," he says. Because his mind is swifter than his speech, he often speaks in fragments. And a simple question can yield a 10-minute reply. "It's time to get the material out. . . . And that's important for moral reasons for our kind of society, as well as for scholarly reasons.

"More and more people want to participate in political and economic decision-making. More and more people want to participate in the business of secular learning. And also in this business of rediscovering the uniqueness of cultures. This is a fantastic resource for all of that. And we've got to get its riches out so that other people can use it."

That, Dr. Billington says, is why he believes in projects such as American Memory.

I remind him of a 1988 speech he gave to the Friends of Libraries USA in which he said, "We treasure books because they are the individual's portable, affordable link with the memory, mind and imagination of the rest of humanity—a moral antidote, if you like, to the creeping passivity, parochialism and shortened attention spans of our video culture."

In the same address, he exhorted mankind to wonder and be silent. "This is easier for readers than for viewers," he said, "for adventurers than for spectators."

Have we become a culture of viewers and spectators? I ask him.

Oh yes, he says.

And isn't American Memory a spectator sport?

"No, sir," he says, his dander up a little. "American Memory is basically a passive archive unless you make active use of it. It's extremely demanding intellectually . . . a lot of it has the attractiveness of audio-visual material, but there's nothing wrong with that. Indeed, in fact, the problems of our republic are that the mind isn't actively engaging with the new, the audio and visual—as well as the textual—information all around it."

With American Memory, he says, "you're reasserting old values through new technology. And unless they are reasserted through the new technologies, we're doomed, because you can't keep the technologies back. We're a free society. Nobody's going to break up all the computers."

He chops the air for emphasis. "The battle has got to be joined on the electronic front," he says, "but you have to be clear that you're in a battle, that it's not—you're not just trying to adjust to the new technology and become a kind of adjunct to it. You've got to use it in a way that reasserts the values of the book culture. And it reasserts—and this is what's important for this city, and for this culture—and it reasserts the values of history, of memory.

"That's why, you know, we talk about memory and imagination. You don't have any imagination without memory—you don't. And we're losing our memory. This is a very present-minded city, and we have an extremely present-minded agenda, and there's a kind of dynamism of that that's attractive and should not be."

"The great thing about the book culture," he says, "was that books represented a coherent work of a human mind, bringing a universe together in a novel, in a history, in something—and they can have a distinct point of view. And a library was sort of a temple of pluralism, because it brought in all the different books, points of view."

"Machines," he says, neatly summing up the argument against the technology to which he has entrusted the Library's future, "tend to eliminate points of view."

After a couple of weeks of working around the Library, I'm still overwhelmed by the magnitude and significance of its task. I've barely skimmed the surface of its selections process, its day-to-day operation, its conservation and preservation efforts and its technological innovations. And I haven't had time to explore the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, which provides talking books and other services to 700,000 patrons a year; the Center for the Book, which attempts to foster national interest in reading; the American Folklife Center, which collects folk music, folk art and folklore of the country; the full slate of chamber music concerts, films, lectures and poetry readings; plans for a Discovery Center, a hands-on, high-tech introduction to the Library designed for young people; its scholarly programs; its children's literature center; and countless other facets of the place.

Standing under Erotica, a frieze high on the wall of the Jefferson Building's main foyer, I am feeling somewhat weary, but the emissaries from the British Library—Kenneth Cooper and Michael Saunders Watson—look amazingly chipper.

They have spent the day touring the Library, asking questions about its acquisitions, its deacidification trials, its aspirations for the future. They have met with people from nearly every division of the institution. The one person they have not met with is James Billington, who has traveled to Arkansas to try to drum up financial support for American Memory from Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton.

The late afternoon sun is slanting through the windows as visitor services officer Lee Probasco guides the Britons into the renovated Main Reading Room. The sight is breathtaking. The room is huge, and though the 240 readers desks are still covered with plastic [this article was written before the room reopened], one can sense the grandeur, the elegance, the loveliness of the room.

Cooper cannot help but compare this reading room to his own in London. "Ours was the inspiration for yours, of course," he says, arms folded and head tilted back. "Yours is more Gothic."

"Yes. Yours is much more ornate," chimes in Saunders Watson. "It's very impressive."

Probasco says that the dome overhead is 160 feet high. She points out the visitors gallery and several statues that have received special attention. But Cooper continues his comparison. *(Cont. on p. 338)*

Brave New Library *(Cont. from p. 337)*

"Ours is bigger," Cooper says. "Diameter is bigger. Ummhumm. It's bigger."

"About the same height," Saunders Watson says.

"Yes," Cooper says. "But bigger."

Probasco mentions several problems with paint that cropped up during restoration. What she does not mention is something that is being whispered about throughout the Library. There is grave concern that after all is said and done, after spending $81.5 million for a complete renovation of the Jefferson and Adams buildings, the domed roof of the Jefferson Building will still leak and much of the restored art may be damaged.

Saunders Watson pauses and glances at a batch of wires sticking out from a conduit on the floor. Probasco leans over and picks up the bouquet of blue and yellow wires. Fiber optics, she explains to the Britons, so that eventually patrons will be able to use personal computers in the Main Reading Room.

Cooper nods and smiles. Saunders Watson says, "What ghosts have you here? We have the ghost of Marx, of course."

Probasco says she knows of no ghosts. But standing there in the reading room one cannot help but feel the presence of all those who have toiled over the Library's books through the centuries.

As the shadows stretch across the room, the visitors stand looking upward, admiring the artistry all about. Lee Probasco also looks heavenward to the interior of the dome and points to a beautiful feminine figure—Human Understanding—draped in cloth and flanked by two cherubs.

One cherub seems to be dancing. The other is holding a rectangular object in his hands. For a minute, it appears to be an ancient tablet. But the longer you stare, the more it looks like a laptop.

Linton Weeks is managing editor of The Washington Post Magazine.

'Enhanced' Cataloging Procedures Tackle Arrearages

The new Enhanced Cataloging Division is a metamorphosis of the old Catalog Management and Publication Division that emerged from the Catalog Publication Division in the 1980s.

The reorganized division has a new mission – arrearage reduction. For the first time in the Library's 191-year history, the division is engaged in the practice of copy cataloging to help reduce the Library's arrearages. Using catalog records already in the on-line data bases of bibliographic utilities such as the Online Computer Library Center Inc. (OCLC) and the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), the staff edits, or enhances, the records for entry into the Library's own on-line catalog. If no utility record exists, the staff creates a minimal cataloging record.

Targets of this arrearage-reduction project are large numbers of unprocessed English, French and Spanish monographs on the shelf for three or more years as well as millions of unprocessed sound recordings—compact discs, records and tapes.

The new division has five sections:

☐ **Catalog Control,** with filing and searching units. The filing unit receives and maintains incoming reports for the *National Union Catalog* and the *National Register of Microform Records,* and maintains the card catalog on Deck 33 of the Jefferson Building. The searching unit searches OCLC and RLIN for records of Library holdings that need cataloging.

☐ **Copy Cataloging.** This section enhances utility bibliographic records or creates minimal cataloging records for English, French and Spanish monographs.

☐ **Special Cataloging.** Using utility records or creating minimal-level records, this section catalogs sound recordings. The section also maintains *Symbols of American Libraries,* which is a published and on-line clearing house of official symbols for libraries, and maintains a microfiche version of the *NUC Register of Additional Locations.*

☐ **Post Cataloging.** This section verifies that Cataloging in Publication (CIP) records correspond accurately to the published books.

☐ **Editorial.** Staffers edit the National Register of Microform Masters, which is part of the *NUC* record on microfiche, as well as *NUC* content for distribution in microfiche by Cataloging Distribution Service.

—Gail Fineberg

LC *Information Bulletin* Index Now Available for 1990

The Library of Congress Professional Association has published the 1990 *LCPA's Index to the Library of Congress Information Bulletin.* This useful key to *Information Bulletin* articles provides access by name and subject to the principal activities of the Library of Congress, as well as a range of national and international developments and issues of interest to libraries, information centers and publishers.

Included are areas such as copyright, preservation, automation, cataloging, authority control, and standards and reports of national and international conferences. The index also provides a handy means of identifying LC projects, products, symposia and exhibitions. For example: Do you recall what LC's ROLLUP project was, the participating agencies and the new name for the project? What is the geographic spread of the Library's services to the nation? The 1990 *Index to the LCIB* offers ready access to articles and maps that provide answers to these and other questions.

The 1990 *LCIB Index* is $10 per copy. *Special offers on back issues:* 1989 and 1990 Indexes—$15; 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 Indexes—$7 per copy; set of seven Indexes, 1984–1990—$45.

Postage: All orders are sent book rate. Overseas orders: add $4. U.S. and Canada first-class postage: add $2. All orders must be prepaid; payment should be made to Library of Congress Professional Association. Foreign orders should be in U.S. currency, payable through a U.S. bank.

Mail orders to LCPA, Index Orders, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540.

Congress Gives LC a 5.6% Increase in '92

The conference report on the bill making appropriations for the legislative branch, including the Library of Congress, for fiscal 1992 was filed on July 30. The House approved the conference report on the same day and the Senate cleared it for the president's signature on Aug. 2.

The conference committee allowed $322,228,000, including $23,279,000 in offsetting receipts from copyright fees and the Cataloging Distribution Service, for the operation of the Library of Congress. This represents an increase of $17,157,000 over the fiscal 1991 appropriation, or 5.62 percent. The increase will provide for mandatory Library cost increases. The conference amount is $5,228,000 less than the House allowed and $1,591,000 less than the Senate allowed.

Funds for mass deacidification ($5.2 million), which were in the House-approved bill, were deleted by the conference committee. The report stated, "The conferees believe there are continuing questions [concerning] the technologies and their treatment effects on books and other materials."

The conferees also deleted $222,000 provided in the House bill for certain improvements at the Sixth and East Capitol streets (St. Cecilia's) building; $1 million in the Senate bill for automation; and $180,000 for financial services positions. Funds for 10 positions for deacidification were deleted but the Conference Committee allowed $142,761 to be used for three unfinanced but currently authorized positions in Financial Management.

The committee approved the Senate amendment ($622,000) to subsidize the sale of printed catalog cards but said that LC should encourage libraries to find alternative means to the printed card, including CD-ROM, microfiche, etc.

For the Congressional Research Service, the conferees approved $55,725,000 as proposed by the House rather than the $56,000,000 proposed by the Senate.

In discussing the conference report on the floor of the House July 30, Chairman Vic Fazio, a California Democrat, stated:

"On the issue of Library of Congress deacidification we agreed with the Senate not to allow additional funds for large-scale book deacidification. Funds are already available to the Library of Congress, but we are not yet convinced that they are ready yet to move into mass deacidification. We think they should proceed very cautiously to make sure we operate with the highest standards of assurance of the quality of the work as well as the safety of the people who are doing it.

"We have to be a leader in this area because 25 percent of the books in our collections are already in a state of acid deterioration. We have similar problems in research libraries across the country. It is very important we get on top of this, but we need to know what we are doing before we embark to the extent that we ultimately will need to. Congress will support the Library when the time comes that the program can operate successfully."

Coup *(Cont. from p. 323)*

does not advise Americans to leave. They will be among the first to know if the situation changes. The Embassy advises only that Americans stay away from the demonstrations."

The first news of the LC delegation's activities came by fax, sent at 6:24 p.m. Aug. 19, from Mr. Levner to Michael Albin, chief of the Order Division, saying, "The LC delegation visited today our office. They are all right. The U.S.S.R. Minister of Culture and Chairman of U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet gave guarantees of security for all participants of IFLA Conference. Please inform their familys [sic] about it. The IFLA meetings will continue according to the program."

And they did. Irene Steckler, special assistant to the Librarian, said, "The librarians didn't miss a beat. They even held an opening prayer at St. Basil's on the day of the coup."

According to Ms. Steckler, Dr. Billington was in Moscow not only to attend IFLA but to attend a meeting of the Congress of Compatriots, a group of Soviet émigrés who came back to their native country to meet with other Russia experts on Russian literature, religion and philosophy.

Ms. Chase said that Dr. Billington "was very calm" during the two conversations she had with him, on Aug. 20 and 21. "He was extremely impressed by the Russian people. He said he felt honored to be with them," she said.

"The Librarian said they were not afraid to stand up, were not going to submit to the old ways," added Ms. Steckler.

Reaching his boss, Joseph Ross, director of the Congressional Research Service, at 4 a.m. on Aug. 20, was William Robinson, CRS deputy director. He reported to Mr. Ross that all was well and that the conference was still in session. Transportation on the Moscow subway system continued without interruption, he said.

An evening IFLA reception, scheduled in the Kremlin, was also held, on Aug. 21, the day the coup collapsed. In one e-Mail, Kimberly Dobbs said he planned on continuing his itinerary, which included a working trip to China; Ms. Montviloff still planned to visit other Soviet cities.

Ms. Steckler said, "The assumption is that people will still go on with their plans. Mikhail Levner was even working on the acquisitions program [during the crisis].

—*Guy Lamolinara*

Collection-Level Cataloging at the Library of Congress

Cataloging 'Alternatives' for the Library's Arrearages

As the size and complexity of library collections grow, so does the challenge of providing access to those collections.

The responsibility of the Library of Congress to explore alternative approaches to cataloging increases in tandem with its growing collections. One such approach, collection-level cataloging, promises to be very successful in ensuring access to portions of the largest and most complex library collections in the world.

Collection-level cataloging involves the creation of single bibliographic records for groups of library materials that have been intentionally brought together at the technical processing stage. By grouping related items together at the cataloging stage, collection-level cataloging is an effective response to growing processing arrearages and, at the same time, offers enhanced access to the Library's increasingly diverse collections.

Collection-level cataloging draws from the long tradition of archival processing of complex collections of historical materials. Archival collections are usually formed by or around a person, family, corporate body or subject, usually from a common source as a natural product of activity or function. The archival approach takes advantage of the natural relationships among the items in such a collection and recognizes the importance of capturing those relationships in the corresponding bibliographic record.

In collection-level cataloging, however, the collection described in a single bibliographic record is frequently an "artificial" one because it has been explicitly created for technical processing purposes. Characteristics upon which such a collection could be based include personal author, issuing body, language, subject or form of material.

The first group of materials to receive collection-level treatment at the Library was the Lesser-Known Languages Collection. The collection is made up of groups of materials in more than 600 lesser-known languages, dialects, pidgins and creoles from around the world. The volumes in these collections are important mainly as examples of the written languages and not for the content of the volumes themselves. Most of the materials are printed in the Roman alphabet or in a derivative adapted for the needs of the particular language, such as !Kung. Some, such as Cherokee and older versions of Eskimo, are in characters specifically developed for those languages and unrelated to any other.

Many of the languages are represented by only a few pieces, while others occupy several Hollinger boxes. Much of the material was produced in the furtherance of missionary activities, especially by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and consists of Bible stories and translations. There are many primers of various sorts, folk tales, elementary textbooks and a few literary, historical and political pieces.

New materials destined for the Lesser-Known Languages Collection are usually so designated by Selection Office staffers, although appropriate materials are also gathered by library technicians and catalogers at later stages of processing.

Each collection-level record consists of a constructed title ([name of language] publications); an imprint consisting of [S.l. : s.n.], <[dates of coverage]>; a collation containing the number of volumes in the collection at the time of cataloging, an indication of illustrative matter and the range of volume sizes; a partial contents note; a single subject heading in the form [name of language]–Texts; and a call number containing the character string "Lesser-known languages." Subject authority records for the languages have been created.

Other types of materials are also designated for collection-level treatment at the time of their receipt. Collection-level records have been created by subject catalogers for several collections of monographs, pamphlets and ephemera. Examples of these types of materials include minor publications of political parties and special-interest groups; works of fiction, drama and poetry that represent a particular style or literary movement; miscellaneous publications by or about individuals or organizations; brief reports and pamphlets on specific topics, particularly outside the United States, such as transportation, communications and urban development; and brochures, guides and ephemera related to a noteworthy event such as a royal coronation, presidential inauguration, the U.S. bicentennial, or one of the Olympic Games.

The Hispanic Division is providing collection-level processing to current ephemera from human rights, refugee, feminist, environmental, labor and political groups in Mexico, Central America and Panama. Hispanic Division and Cataloging Directorate staff are also using collection-level cataloging to make available a large group of pamphlets covering a variety of subjects and published primarily in Latin America from 1900 to 1945.

Staffers in the Library's field office in Delhi are collecting ephemera related to Indian regional and national elections for the Asian Division; these materials are microfilmed and given collection-level cataloging. The Asian Division has also recently organized a group of older ephemeral materials by subject and

New from Cataloging Distribution Service

CDMARC Bibliographic, the Library of Congress USMARC data base on CD-ROM, has just been released by the Cataloging Distribution Service (CDS). By purchasing an annual subscription, any library with an IBM or compatible personal computer and CD-ROM drives will have low-cost access to LC bibliographic records.

Four years of development went into producing *CDMARC Bibliographic* and two other CD-ROM products already released. The two other products, *CDMARC Names,* and *CDMARC Subjects,* contain LC authority files. All three have a similar user interface.

CDMARC Bibliographic provides more than 4 million records on six discs and is available for $1,200 (North America) and $1,250 (international). Fully cumulated updates (six new discs) are issued each quarter—and there is no additional charge for multisite use in a local area network (LAN), according to CDS Chief Susan M. Tarr. "I'm very happy to be able to make that announcement," she said. "We have had many inquiries about LAN use."

CDMARC Bibliographic joins other CD-ROM products on the market that contain LC cataloging records taken from MARC (machine readable cataloging) tapes, but this one comes directly from the Library of Congress and contains powerful

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Collection-Level *(Cont. from p. 340)*

is sending those materials to Delhi for the same treatment.

In addition to current receipts that are designated for collection-level treatment, materials already in the Library's custody are receiving collection-level treatment. As a result of the recent census of the Library's arrearages, a number of groups of materials have been distinguished as being of exceptional research value. Collection-level cataloging has been identified by the Cataloging Directorate and the Library's custodial divisions as a viable technique for ensuring access to some arrearage materials.

The Japanese School Textbook Collection has more than 9,000 textbooks from the mid-19th century through the post-World War II period. Staff from the Asian Division have grouped the textbooks by time period, school, grade and subject. The textbooks are represented in the Library's on-line system by fewer than two dozen bibliographic records that together fully describe the collection. Item-level access to the collection is provided by a title listing in the Asian Division reading room.

Although the Library of Congress does not regularly collect textbooks, the Japanese textbook collection will provide scholars with a unique source of research material that otherwise might not have been made available to them.

The collection-level cataloging projects described in this article result in bibliographic records that reside in the BOOKS file in the Library's on-line system. Because the items in each collection are published textual material, the MARC format for Books has been used. Other MARC formats accommodate collection-level cataloging and have been regularly used at the Library of Congress for such purposes.

Staffers in the Manuscript Division and the Prints and Photographs Division use the MARC formats for Archival and Manuscripts Control and Visual Materials, respectively, to catalog various collections in their custody. The experience of the Library with collection-level cataloging to date has been primarily with single-format collections, although it is becoming increasingly apparent that the need to provide collection-level treatment to collections of materials in various and mixed formats is pressing.

As the arrearages continue to present an unprecedented challenge to those responsible for technical processing, the Library of Congress will continue to explore creative and practical ways to ensure access to its collections.

Collections Services Memorandum No. 127 provides guidelines for collection-level cataloging. For a copy of the guidelines write:

Director for Cataloging, Collections Services, Library of Congress, Washington DC 20540

—Martha O'Hara Conway

CDS *(Cont. from p. 341)*
and other features that appeal to public and school libraries.

For research libraries, the ability to print custom bibliographies on demand is a boon. Records are available in most languages of the world – not only for books, but also for serials, maps, music and audiovisual materials.

Powerful retrieval software enables users to search any combination of 19 indexes using Boolean operators. Keywords can also be used to search indexed fields. Many of the indexes, such as publisher, language, country, corporate or meeting name, publisher number (music), physical description and form of material, are not available in some other products. *CDMARC Bibliographic* can also be used to browse the Library of Congress MARC shelflist for titles cataloged since 1968.

A feature for school, public and special libraries is the inclusion of both Dewey numbers and LC call number indexes. In addition, the product can be used as a powerful resource for retrospective conversion. "Libraries can typically achieve a very high hit rate for the titles they search; then, they can export each record in USMARC format," said Ms. Tarr.

CDMARC Bibliographic offers libraries a way to avoid costly telecommunications charges incurred by using on-line, fee-based services.

By using vendor interfaces, records may be exported in USMARC format to many turnkey automated library systems. They may also be saved in ASCII format and used with popular word processing software packages to add local notes.

Each user may select from among five different screen displays: catalog card, labeled record display, full MARC record display, customized MARC record display and customized labeled record display.

Ms. Tarr noted that "since there are no stopwords such as you might find in on-line services, no search is impossible with *CDMARC Bibliographic.*"

Designed for use on PCs and multiple CD-ROM drives, *CDMARC Bibliographic* has specific hardware requirements that buyers should check before ordering. A dedicated 800-number hot line provides user support that includes step-by-step installation help, if needed.

For information, write the Library of Congress, Cataloging Distribution Service, Customer Services Section, Washington, DC 20541-5017; phone (202) 707-6100 or fax (202) 707-1334.

LCSH 14th Edition Now Available

Library of Congress Subject Headings, 14th edition (*LCSH* 14th) has been published by the Cataloging Distribution Service of the Library. The 1991 edition of this annual publication contains approximately 186,000 subject headings – including 5,000 more entries than last year's edition, which are highlighted by an alphabetical list of all headings changed since the 13th edition. This list is especially valuable to librarians using *LCSH* for local authority control. The three-volume set is $160 (North America) or $190 (international).

One noteworthy subject heading new to this year's edition is *Operation Desert Shield, 1990-*. In addition, *LCSH* 14th reflects some of the geopolitical changes sweeping the world; for example, *Poland – Politics and government – 1980-* is now two separate headings: *Poland – Politics and government – 1980-1989* and *Poland – Politics and government – 1989*.

Besides the case-bound print edition, CDS offers *LCSH* in two additional formats. For professionals who wish subject data updated quarterly, both microfiche and CD-ROM versions are available. A 1991 subscription to *Library of Congress Subject Headings Cumulative Microform Edition* provides quarterly cumulations for $85 (North America) or $90 (international). The CD-ROM version, *CDMARC Subjects*, offers powerful search and retrieval capabilities. It provides quarterly cumulations, all necessary software, user's manual, keyboard template, ready-reference card and free technical support. A 1991 subscription to *CDMARC Subjects* costs $315 (North America) or $390 (international).

To order *LCSH* 14th edition in print, or the microfiche or CD-ROM versions, contact: Library of Congress, Cataloging Distribution Service, Customer Services Section, Washington, DC 20541-5017, or telephone (202) 707-6100 or fax (202) 707-1334.

Fourth Edition of *Subject Cataloging Manual: Subject Headings* Now Available

Subject Cataloging Manual: Subject Headings, 4th edition, has just been published by the Cataloging Distribution Service. It replaces the 1988 third edition and its updates and ensures that catalogers keep current with LC practice. The new edition is fully cumulated, updated and reformatted to make it more readable. The manual is used in the cataloging world routinely as *the* guide to assigning LC subject headings.

In the absence of an official cataloging code for the "how-to's" of subject cataloging, *Subject Cataloging Manual: Subject Headings*, 4th edition promotes national uniformity in cataloging practice through practical guidelines and procedures used in the Library to assign LC subject headings in a consistent, standardized manner in many different cataloging situations. The manual assists catalogers by providing answers to recurring problems and explains how LC handles the problems. Statements of procedures are often accompanied by examples of actual titles selected from the LC MARC (machine-readable cataloging) bibliographic data base or invented to illustrate a point. The manual also provides the rationale for assigning subject headings to specific types of works.

Among the new features, the fourth edition is geared toward catalogers working in automated environments. It assists libraries connected to local cataloging networks or engaged in cooperative cataloging projects with the Library of Congress. The new edition also reflects the trend toward cataloging simplification: for example, instructions on cataloging biographies (H 1330), surveys (H 2149) and translations (H 2220) have been greatly simplified. Also, a significant exception to the rules for placement of geographic subdivisions within the subject heading string has been eliminated.

The fourth edition also includes guidelines on the use of free-floating subdivisions. (*Free-floating Subdivisions: An Alphabetical Index* , also available from the Cataloging Distribution Service, is an important companion to *Subject Cataloging Manual: Subject Headings*, 4th edition.)

Subject Cataloging Manual: Subject Headings, 4th edition costs $115 (North America) or $130 (international); it is packaged as a two-volume binder set and includes one update in 1991. Order from: Library of Congress, Customer Services Section, Cataloging Distribution Service, Washington, DC 20541-5017; telephone: (202) 707-6100; fax: (202) 707-1334.

New Romanization Guide Published

A transliteration guide has just been published by the Cataloging Distribution Service that brings together in one place all the romanization tables that have appeared over the past 20 years in the *Cataloging Service Bulletin*.

Edited by Randall K. Barry of the Network Development and MARC Standards Office, the new publication is called *ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Transliteration Schemes for Non-Roman Scripts.*

It is especially useful for librarians, linguists, archivists, writers, journalists, catalogers and copy editors. Any professional who transliterates words, proper names, titles or terms from a nonroman script into the roman script will need this guide.

ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Transliteration Schemes for Non-Roman Scripts provides direct access to the latest in transliteration schemes. It can save research time and help ensure the accuracy of transliteration.

The book features schemes developed by Library of Congress experts and other for-

eign language specialists. The compilation includes 50 romanization and transliteration tables covering more than 140 languages and dialects written in nonroman scripts.

The tables can be used whenever the need arises to transliterate a vernacular or nonroman script (for example, Arabic) into the roman alphabet.

Each nonroman character—alphabetic, syllabic, ideographic—is presented as unambiguously as possible. Characters in some scripts have been stylized to make them easily distinguishable from other similar characters.

Also, when a transliterator needs to impart characteristics of a roman script such as capitalization, word division or sentence demarcation that are not available in the original language, this book provides guidelines.

Handwritten portions that appeared in the *Cataloging Service Bulletin* were replaced with modern scripts. Instructions for encoding special characters (such as an apostrophe) and character modifiers (diacritics) in machine-readable form have been added—important to librarians who create records following USMARC formats.

ALA-LC Romanization Tables features easy-to-read tables, a convenient index by languages, an appendix listing and describing special characters and character modifiers, a special section on character sets, two first-time tables: Komi (Molodtsov) and Tigrinya, and completely revised word division guidelines for Korean.

ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Transliteration Schemes for Non-Roman Scripts is $24 (North America) and $26 (international). For ordering information call CDS at (202) 707-6100 or fax (202) 707-1334, or write Library of Congress, Cataloging Distribution Service, Customer Services Section, Washington, DC 20541-5017.

LC Cosponsors 'Decade of the Brain'

The Library and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) cosponsored an all-day symposium July 24 on the "Frontiers of Neuroscience."

Dr. Billington discusses conference issues with Rep. Sherwood L. Boehlert (left) and Sen. Jeff Bingaman during a break in the "Decade of the Brain" symposium July 24.

The symposium, held at the Library, initiated the LC-NIMH Decade of the Brain Lecture Series. The series, scheduled to be held throughout the nineties, is designed to celebrate Presidential Proclamation 6158 declaring the nineties as the "Decade of the Brain."

According to Declan C. Murphy, executive assistant to the Librarian of Congress, "This is the first program in a series over the next decade designed to alert Congress and the general public to the extraordinary advances in neuroscience and their relevance to public policy in such matters as artificial intelligence, learning and education and Alzheimer's disease. It is a field in which the United States has led the world."

The series is one of the ways in which the Library is developing closer ties with the nation's scientific community, Dr. Murphy said, in part because of its own sizable collections in scientific and technical information.

The July 24 symposium participants included leading neuroscience researchers, scientific leaders from several disciplines, government officials and congressional members, including Sens. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), Bill Bradley (D-N.J.) and Larry Pressler (R-S.D.), and Reps. Sherwood Boehlert (R-N.Y.), Joseph Early (D-Mass.), Jim Leach (R-Iowa) and Robert E. Wise Jr. (D-W.Va.).

Dr. Murphy and Dr. Lewis Judd, chairman of the department of psychiatry at the University of California, San Diego, serve as cochairs of the LC-NIMH Steering Committee. Librarian of Congress James H. Billington, who introduced the program, said that "neuroscience investigates one of nature's great mysteries, the human brain; it also provides insights into the nature of the untapped potential of human beings."

Following this, the history of the Decade of the Brain was given by Dr. Alan I. Leshner, acting director of NIMH, who acknowledged the late Rep. Silvio O. Conte (R-Mass.) for his efforts on behalf of the Decade of the Brain initiative. Rep. Conte sponsored a joint resolution in 1985, and three years later requested a report on specific brain disorders from NIMH and the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke. Congress passed the resolution in 1989, and in 1990 President Bush signed it into law.

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